

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide

Three Nights

National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
Shenandoah National Park
Emergency: 1-800-732-0911



Graves Mill, Rapidan, and Jones Mountain

Standard - circuit

Level: Experienced

Total Length: 18.6 miles

Trip Description: Variety of forest habitats; historic sites: Rapidan Camp and Jones Mtn. Cabin

Entry: Graves Mill Boundary

Central District; East side; Route 662

Exit: Graves Mill Boundary

Central District; East side; Route 662

Map(s): PATC #10 Central District

Day One

Campsite: Graves Mill Trail - backcountry

1 to 2.1 miles

Hike into Shenandoah National Park on Graves Mill Trail 0.5 mile.

Turn right, remaining on Graves Mill Trail. Cross stream, and hike as far as desired.

Find a place to camp. Watch out for poison ivy

Day Two

Campsite: Mill Prong Trail - backcountry

6.4 to 9.5 miles

Finish hiking Graves Mill Trail (total 2.2 miles from parking area).

Turn left onto Rapidan Fire Road and hike 3.4 miles.

Turn left onto Rapidan Camp Road, hiking 0.8 mile to Rapidan Camp.

Explore the camp, then look for Mill Prong Horse Trail at the north end of the camp.

Hike uphill on Mill Prong Horse Trail (yellow-blazed) trail for 0.8 mile.

Bear left onto blue-blazed Mill Prong Trail at junction and hike 1 mile, looking for a place to camp; OR

Turn left, hiking south on Appalachian Trail (AT) at least 3 miles.

Look for a place to dry camp in the next couple of miles.

Day Three

Campsite: Staunton River/McDaniel Hollow Trail - backcountry

6.5 to 9 miles

Continue hiking south on the AT for a total of 2.5 miles since Mill Prong Trail.

Turn left onto Laurel Prong Trail and hike 1 mile.

Turn right onto Cat Knob Trail, hiking 0.5 mile.

Turn right onto Jones Mountain Trail and hike 3.5 miles.

Turn left onto McDaniel Hollow Trail and find a place to camp in the next 0.5 mile.

(Or to make this a two-night trip, keep hiking as you would on day four to return to vehicle.)

Day Four

2.4 to 2.9 miles

Finish hiking McDaniel Hollow Trail (0 to 0.5 mile).

Turn right onto Staunton River Trail and hike 2.4 miles to your vehicle.

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Notes

You will be following the Rapidan River upstream from where it leaves Shenandoah National Park for the last time. Fish, swimming holes, and level areas to camp abound. Rapidan Camp is the historic retreat built for President Hoover; the buildings and exhibits may be open for a self-guided tour. The circuit back will take you on the AT and over Hazeltop Mountain, down into the mountain laurel thickets at Laurel Prong, then up Jones Mountain where you can see (or even stay in) an old mountain cabin. (Visit <http://potomacappalachian.org> for information on staying in Jones Mountain Cabin.)

Options

Two-night options – 7.5 to 10.5 miles

Hike both days one and two on the first day, camping on upper Mill Prong Trail or on the AT. Or hike in the other direction – day four on your first day, day three on your second day, and days one and two on your last day.